

TITLE OF THE INVENTION

~~DATA DISPLAY DEVICE, DATA DISPLAY METHOD AND~~ ~~COMPUTER PROGRAM PRODUCT~~SCREEN OBJECT APPEARANCE CONTROL AND CHANGING METHOD

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

1. Field of the Invention

[0001] The present invention relates to a data display device that ~~on a screen displays data~~ in a specific representation type on a screen, and displays data display, which presents information in a way that text alone cannot, more particularly, to a data display device by which individual pieces of information can be made distinctly visible that makes different types of data more visible even if the pieces are displayed by a common way their representation types are the same.

2. Description of the Related Art

[0002] Data display devices, which display data ~~display that presents information in a way that text alone cannot,~~ that can be represented in a specific representation type on a screen, have been used (for example, see Japanese Patent Application Laid-Open No. 2000-020049). More specifically, such conventional data display devices display a collection of digital values as data display in a representation type such as fill, plot, line contour, or vector.

[0003] However, in the conventional data display devices, when individual pieces of information different types of data are presented by a common data display represented in the same representation type, display of one piece of information one type of the data overlaps with or covers ~~display of the other pieces~~. As a result, the information data tends to appear indistinct due to opaqueness ~~at of~~ the overlapped or covered portion.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

[0004] It is an object of the present invention to at least solve the problems in the conventional technology.

[0005] An object display device according to one aspect of the present invention includes an appearance ~~characteristic-property~~ obtaining unit and a display control unit. The appearance ~~characteristic-property~~ obtaining unit obtains appearance ~~characteristic-property~~ of each of data

~~objects~~object sets that are displayed on a screen by similar data display waysrepresented in a same data representation type on a screen. ~~The data objects represent pieces of information to be displayed on the screen respectively.~~The object set is data objects indicating a type of data, and the appearance property indicates a fill area, the number of colors, or the number of data objects. The display control unit changes an appearance of at least one of the ~~data objects~~ object sets so that the at least one of the ~~data objects~~ object sets is displayed in a distinct appearance, ~~depending on the appearance characteristic obtained~~ based on the appearance property.

[0006] An object display method according to another aspect of the present invention includes obtaining appearance characteristic property of each of data objects object sets that are displayed on a screen by similar data display waysrepresented in a same data representation type on a screen. ~~The data objects represent pieces of information to be displayed on the screen respectively.~~The object set is data objects indicating a type of data, and the appearance property indicates a fill area, the number of colors, or the number of data objects. The object display method also includes changing an appearance of at least one of the ~~data objects~~objects sets so that the at least one of the ~~data objects~~ object sets is displayed in a distinct appearance, ~~depending on the appearance characteristic obtained~~ based on the appearance property.

[0007] The computer program product according to still another aspect of the present invention realizes the method according to the present invention on a computer.

[0008] The other objects, features and advantages of the present invention are specifically set forth in or will become apparent from the following detailed descriptions of the invention when read in conjunction with the accompanying drawings.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

[0009] Fig. 1 is a block diagram of a data display device according to a first embodiment of the present invention;~~Fig. 2 is a drawing that explains a weighting process for each data display way;~~

[0010] Fig. ~~[[3]]~~ 2 is a drawing that explains a display control process;

[0011] Fig. ~~[[4]]~~ 3 is a flow chart showing the process steps of the data display device according to the first embodiment;

~~[0012]~~ Fig. ~~[[5]]~~ 4 is a sample screen that is output on the output unit shows a weather map
output from the data display device;

~~[0013]~~ Fig. ~~[[6]]~~ 5 is a drawing illustrating the structure of a computer system according to a
second embodiment of the present invention; and

~~[0014]~~ Fig. ~~[[7]]~~ 6 is a block diagram of the main unit of the computer system shown in Fig. ~~[[6]]~~
5.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE PREFERRED EMBODIMENTS

~~[0009]~~~~[0015]~~ Exemplary embodiments of the ~~a~~ data display device, a data display device
method, and a computer program product according to the present invention will be explained
next with reference to the accompanying drawings.

~~[0010]~~~~[0016]~~ A data display device and a data display method of a first embodiment will be
explained first, and then a computer system that executes a computer program product for
displaying data according to a second embodiment will be explained. Finally, various
modifications of the present invention will be explained.

~~[0011]~~~~[0017]~~ An overview and main features of the data display device according to the first
embodiment will be explained first. Fig. 1 is a block diagram of the data display device
according to the first embodiment of the present invention. The data display device 10 displays
~~information by a predetermined data display way, on a screen~~ data in a specific representation
type on a screen.

~~[0012]~~~~[0018]~~ The data display 10 is characterized in a data display process that includes
obtaining characteristics of an appearance property of individual pieces of information data
objects indicating different types of data to be displayed by similar data display ways in the
same representation type; and changing appearances of the pieces depending on the
characteristics data objects according to the appearance property so that the pieces different
types of data are distinctly distinguished from each other. As a result, this data display process
allows the information data objects to be distinctly visualized even if individual pieces of the
information are presented the data objects indicating the different type of data are represented
in the same representation type on a screen ~~by similar data display ways.~~

~~[0013][0019]~~ For example, first, from objects (hereinafter, "data objects") corresponding to pieces of information which is collection of digital values

For example, if there are data X represented in filled objects Xf and data Y represented in filled objects Yf, where the filled objects corresponding to the specific representation type, the appearance properties of the filled objects Xf and Yf are the fill area and the number of color, fill area and number of colors of individual data objects each displayed by a filled object are obtained. Then, each data object is applied with a weighted value so that the data object having a large fill area and few colors is placed in a lower layer. Finally, the transparency of the data object applied with a lower weighted value is increased. If the filled objects Xf are larger than the filled objects Yf in fill area and are smaller than the filled objects Yf in the number of colors, the filled objects Xf and Yf are applied with weighted values so that the filled objects Xf are placed under the filled objects Yf and the filled objects Yf have a transparency smaller than that of the filled objects Xf. The data objects indicating a type of data (corresponding to the filled objects Xf or Yf) will be referred to as "object set" below.

~~[0014][0020]~~ Thus, this the data display device prevents data objects different object sets on a screen from being indistinct due to opaqueness at of the overlapped or covered portion of the objectsobject sets, and therefore allows the data-objects object sets to be distinctly visualized even if individual data-objectsthe different object sets are presented-represented on the screen by similar data display waysin the same representation type.

~~[0015][0021]~~ The structure of the data display device 10 according to the first embodiment will be explained next. As shown in Fig. 1, the data display device 10 includes an input unit 11, an output unit 12, a memory 13, and a controller 14.

~~[0016][0022]~~ The input unit 11 is a means by which receives various data-are-entered. The input unit 11 can be a keyboard, mouse or a track ball. More specifically, the input unit 11 receives data (which consists of collection of digital values) which can be displayed on the screen, and instructions for a data display-wayrepresentation type (e.g. fill, plot, line contour, or vector) by-in which the data is represented on-the-screen-as the data-objectsobject set on the screen. The input unit 11 in the present invention also receives the data as-a plurality-of pieces of information-for each data display-wayrepresentation type.

~~[0017][0023]~~ The output unit 12 is a means on which-outputs various data-are-output. More specifically, the output unit 12 is a display unit which displays the result (see Fig. 5) of the

processes carried out by ~~a~~an appearance characteristic-property obtaining unit 14a, a weighting unit 14b, and a display control unit 14c, which are included in the controller 14.

~~[0018]~~[0024] The memory 13 is a storage unit which stores data and programs necessary for the processes of the controller 14. More specifically, the memory 13 stores physical data containing the digital values to be handled and a visualizing software program that realizes the data display ways.

~~[0019]~~[0025] The controller 14 ~~has an internal memory for storing~~may store control programs (e.g. the operating system), programs for regulating various processes, and the required data. With the help of these programs and data, the controller 14 carries out various processes. Particularly, in the context of the present invention, the controller 14 includes the appearance ~~characteristic-property~~ obtaining unit 14a, the weighting unit 14b, and ~~the~~ display control unit 14c.

~~[0020]~~[0026] The appearance ~~characteristic-property~~ obtaining unit 14a obtains the appearance ~~characteristic-properties~~ of each of the data objects ~~presented by similar data display ways~~the object set represented in the same representation type. For instance, as shown in Fig. ~~[[3]]~~ 2, for data object A and data object B which are ~~presented by the data display way~~ represented in the data representation type "fill", the appearance ~~characteristic-property~~ obtaining unit 14a obtains ~~from the memory 13 the appearance~~the appearance characteristics properties "the fill area and/or number of colors" from the memory 13. For data object C and data object D which are ~~presented by the data display way~~ represented in the data representation type "plot", the appearance ~~characteristic-property~~ obtaining unit 14a obtains ~~from the memory 13 the appearance characteristic-property~~ "the number of plots" from the memory 13. For data object E and data object F which are ~~presented by the data display way~~ represented in the data representation type "line contour", the appearance ~~characteristic-property~~ obtaining unit 14a obtains ~~from the memory 13 the appearance characteristic-property~~ "the number of lines from the memory 13. For data object G and data object H which are ~~presented by the data display way~~ represented in the data representation type "vector" as well, the appearance ~~characteristic-property~~ obtaining unit 14a obtains ~~from the memory 13 the appearance characteristic-property~~ "the number of lines" from the memory 13.

~~[0021]~~[0027] The weighting unit 14b applies a weighted value, to each object set based on the appearance ~~characteristic-property~~ obtained by the appearance ~~characteristic-property~~ obtaining

unit 14a; ~~each of the plural data objects presented by similar data display ways.~~ More specifically, the weighted values are applied to the objects sets as follows:

FILL: When there are plural fill layers, a transparency is applied as follows:

a weighted value of 0.0 (100% transparency) to 1.0 (0% transparency)

the highest fill area and number of colors: $1/1 = 1.0$

the second highest fill area and number of colors: $1/2 = 0.5$

...

the nth highest fill area and number of colors: $1/n = 0.###$ (approaching

0)

PLOT:

the largest number of plots: this number/(a total of all number of plots on
n objects sets)

the second largest number of plots: this number/(a total of all number of
plots of n objects sets)

...

the nth largest number of plots: this number/(a total of all number of plots
on n object sets)

LINE CONTOUR:

the largest number of line contours: this number/(a total of all number/(a
total of all number of line contours of n object sets)

the second largest number of line contours: this number/(a total of all
number of line contours of n objects sets)

...

the nth largest number of line contours: this number/(a total of all number of line contours of n objects sets)

VECTOR:

the largest number of vectors: this number/(a total of all number of vectors of n object sets)

the second largest number of vectors: this number/(a total of all number of vectors of n objects sets)

...

the nth largest number of vectors: this number/(a total of all number of vectors of n object sets)

[0022][0028] ~~as shown in Fig. 2~~ In other words, the weighting unit 14b applies a weighted value to each of data object A and object data B (~~the data objects which are presented by the data display way object sets represented in the data representation type "fill"~~) so that the data object set having a large-larger fill area and few-fewer colors is placed in a lower layer. The weighting unit 14b applies a weighted value to each of data object C and data object D (~~the data objects which are presented by the data display way object sets represented in the data representation type "plot"~~) so that the data-object set having a more-larger number of plots is placed in a lower layer. The weighting unit 14b applies a weighted value to each of data object E and data object F (~~the data objects which are presented by the data display way object sets represented in the data representation type "line contour"~~) so that the data-object set having a more-larger number of lines is placed in a lower layer. Similarly, the weighting unit 14b applies a weighted value to each of data object G and data object H (~~the data objects which are presented by the data display way object sets represented in the data "vector"~~) so that the data object set having a larger number of lines is placed in a lower layer.

[0023][0029] The display control unit 14c changes the appearance of each data-object set so that the data object set is displayed in a distinct appearance, ~~depending on~~ according to its appearance ~~characteristic-property~~ obtained by the appearance ~~characteristic property~~ obtaining unit 14a. More specifically, as shown in Fig. ~~[[3]]2~~, the display control unit 14c displays the data object sets ~~a~~ in distinct appearance appearances, ~~depending on~~ according to the weighted value values.

[0024][0030] In the case of data object A and data object B (the ~~data objects which are presented by the data display way object sets represented in the data representation type "fill"~~), for instance, the display control unit 14c superposes data object B on data object A and differentiates the appearances of data object A and data object B by setting the transparency of data object B to 0.5 (that is, lowers the weighted value that represents the transparency, and increases the transparency). In the case of data object C and data object D (the ~~data objects which are presented by the data display way object sets represented in the data representation type "plot"~~), the display control unit 14c superposes data object D on data object C and differentiates the appearances of data object C and data object D by making the plot display of data object C black and small and that of data object D large and light in color. In the case of data object E and data object F (the ~~data objects which are presented by the data display way object sets represented in the data representation type "line contour"~~), the display control unit 14c superposes data object F on data object E and differentiates the appearances of data object E and data object F by showing the lines of data object E as thin lines and those of data object F as thick lines. Similarly, in the case of data object G and data object H (the ~~data objects that are presented by the data display way object sets represented in the data representation type "vector"~~), the display control unit 14c superposes data object H on data object G, and differentiates the appearances of data object G and data object H by showing the vectors of data object G as thin arrows and those of data object H as thick arrows (see Fig. 2 and Fig. 3).

[0025][0031] The display control unit 14c then creates a display screen by placing the data object object set represented by the data display way in the data representation type "fill" (data object A and data object B) the bottom-most data in the lowest layer and superposes on this data-object set the data-object set represented by the data display way in the data representation type "line contour" (data object E and data object F), the data-object presented by the data display way-set represented in the data representation type "vector" (data object G and data object H), and the data-object presented by the data display way set represented in the data representation type "plot" (data object C and data object D), in that order (see Fig. 5) and displays the display screen on the output unit 12 (step S405). Fig. 4 shows a weather map output from the data display device.

The following is a legend for fig. [[5]] 4

Plot: STAR which represents Automated Metrological Data Acquisition system (AMEDAS) rainfall.

Plot: CIRCLE which represents AMEDAS rainfall in 24 hours after STAR.

Line contour: SOLID LINE which represents land temperature data in a range from 0 to 20 degrees in intervals of 2 degrees.

Line contour: BROKEN LINE which represents atmospheric data in a range from 990 hPa to 1050 hPa in intervals of 3 hPa.

Vector: SMALL ARROW which represents a wind velocity on land in intervals of 2 degrees, where 1 cm = 10 m/s

Vector: LARGE ARROW, which represents wind velocity in intervals of 5 degrees, where 1 cm = 5 m/s

Fill 1: Surface temperature

Fill 2: Relative land temperature

~~[0026]~~**[0032]** Fig. ~~[[4]]~~ 3 is a flow chart illustrating the process steps of the data display device method according to the first embodiment. The appearance ~~characteristic-property~~ obtaining unit 14a obtains from the memory 13, the appearance ~~characteristics-properties~~ "the fill area and/or the number of colors" for data object A and object B which are ~~data-objects-presented~~ by the data display way ~~objects sets represented in the data representation type~~ "fill", the appearance ~~characteristic-property~~ "the number of plots" for data object C and data object D which are ~~data-object-presented by the representation method~~ ~~object sets represented in the data representation type~~ "plot", the ~~representation-characteristic~~ appearance property "the number of lines" for data E and data F which are ~~data-presented by the data display way~~~~objects sets represented in the data representation type~~ "line contour", and again the appearance ~~characteristic-property~~ "number of lines" for data object G and data object H which are ~~data-object-presented by the data display way~~ ~~object sets represented in the data representation type~~ "vector" (step S401).

~~[0027]~~**[0033]** Once all the appearance ~~characteristics-properties~~ of ~~the object sets for each data display way~~~~representation type~~ has been obtained ("Yes" at step S402), as shown in Fig. 2, the weighing unit 14b applies a weighted value to each of data object A and data object B (the ~~data-object which are presented by the data display way~~ ~~object sets represented in the data representation type~~ "fill") so that the ~~data-object set~~ having a ~~large-larger~~ fill area and ~~few-fewer~~ colors is placed in a lower layer, data object C and data object D (the ~~data-object which are presented by the data display way~~ ~~object sets represented in the data representation type~~ "plot") so that the ~~data-object set~~ having a ~~more-larger~~ number of plots is placed in a lower layer, data object E and data object F (the ~~data-object which are presented by the data display way~~ ~~object sets represented in the data representation type~~ "line contour") so that the ~~data-object set~~ having a ~~more-larger~~ number of plots is placed in a lower layer, data object G and data object H (the ~~data-object which are presented by the data display way~~ ~~object sets represented in the data representation type~~ "vector") so that the ~~data-object set~~ having a ~~more-larger~~ number of plots is placed in a lower layer.

sets represented in the data representation type “line contour”) so that the data-object set having a more-larger number of lines is placed in a lower layer, and data object G and data object H (the data-object which are presented by the data-display wayobject sets represented in the data representation type “vector”) so that the data-object set having a more-larger number of lines is placed in a lower layer (step S403).

[0028][0034] Next, as shown in Fig. 2 and Fig. 3, ~~in the case of~~ for data object A and data object B (the data-object which are presented by the data-display way object sets represented in the data representation type “fill”), the display control unit 14c superposes data object B on data object A and differentiates the appearances of data object A and data object B by setting the transparency of data object B to 0.5 (that is, lowers the weighted value that represents the transparency, and increases the transparency). ~~In the case of~~ For data object C and data object D (the data-object which are presented by the data-display way object sets represented in the data representation type “plot”), the display control unit 14c superposes data object D on data object C and differentiates the appearances of data object C and data object D by making the plot display of data object C black and small and that of data object D large and light in color. ~~In the case of~~ For data object E and data object F (the data-object which are presented by the data display way object sets represented in the data representation type “line contour”), the display control unit 14c superposes data object F on data object E and differentiates the appearances of data object E and data object F by showing the lines of data object E as thin lines and those of data object F as thick lines. Similarly, ~~in the case of~~ for data object G and data object H (the data-object that are presented by the data-display way object sets represented in the data representation type “vector”), the display control unit 14c superposes data object H on data object G, and differentiates the appearances of data object G and data object H by showing the vectors of data object G as thin arrows and those of data object H as thick arrows (step S404).

[0029][0035] The display control unit 14c then creates a display screen by ~~making~~ placing the data-object set represented by in the data representation method-type “fill” (data object A and data object B) ~~the bottom-most data in the lowest layer~~, and superposes on this data-object set the data-object set represented by ~~the data-display way~~ in the data representation type “line contour” (data object E and data object F), the data-object presented by the data-display wayobject set represented in the data representation type “vector” (data object G and data object H), and the data-object presented by the data-display wayobject set represented in the data representation type “plot” (data object C and object D), in that order (see Fig. [[5]] 4) and displays the display screen on the output unit 12 (step S405).

~~[0030]~~**[0036]** Thus in the data display device according to the first embodiment, the appearance ~~characteristic properties~~ of each of the plural data objects presented by similar data display ways ~~the object sets represented in the same representation type is~~ are obtained, and each data-object ~~set~~ is displayed in a distinct appearance based on its appearance ~~characteristic property~~. Therefore, plural data-objects ~~object sets~~ are distinctly visualized even if they are represented by similar data display ways ~~in the same representation type~~.

~~[0034]~~**[0037]** The data display device and the data display method explained in the first embodiment can be realized by executing programs pre-installed in a computer system such as a personal computer or a workstation. A computer system that executes programs that perform functions similar to those of the data display device (data display method) explained in the first embodiment will be explained next.

~~[0032]~~**[0038]** Fig. ~~[[6]]~~ 5 shows a structure of the computer system according to ~~the a~~ second embodiment of the present invention. Fig. ~~[[7]]~~ 6 is a block diagram of the main unit of the computer system shown in Fig. ~~[[6]]~~ 5. The computer system 100 according to the second embodiment of the present invention includes a main unit 101, a display 102 that displays data such as images on a display screen 102a in accordance with the instructions from the main unit 101, a keyboard 103 for inputting data into the computer system 100, and a mouse 104 for pointing to any item on the display screen 102a of the display 102.

~~[0033]~~**[0039]** The main unit 101 of the computer system 100 includes, a central processing unit ~~402~~ 121, a RAM 122, a ROM 123, a hard disk drive (HDD) 124, a CD-ROM drive 125 that receives a CD-ROM 109, a flexible disk (FD) drive 126 that receives ~~[[a]]~~ an FD 108, an I/O interface 127 that connects the display 102, the keyboard 103, and the mouse 104, and a LAN interface 128 that connects to a local area network or a wide area network (LAN/WAN) 106.

~~[0034]~~**[0040]** A modem 105 is connected to the computer system 100 for connecting to a public line 107 such as the Internet. Another computer system (PC) 111, a server 112, and a printer 113 are connected to the computer system 100 via the LAN interface 128 and the LAN/WAN 106.

~~[0035]~~**[0041]** The computer system 100 realizes the functions of the data display device (data display method) by reading and executing the programs recorded in a specific recording medium. The recording medium may include a portable type in the form of FD 108, CD-ROM 109, MO disk, DVD disk, magneto optic disk, IC card, etc., or a 'fixed' type in the form of HDD

124 integral to the computer system 100, RAM 122, ROM 123, etc, or a 'communication medium' in the form of public circuit 107 connected through the modem 105 or LAN/WAN 106 by which the computer system 100 is connected to another computer system 111 and the server 112 and which stores the transmitted program for a short duration.

[0036][0042] In other words, the programs that make the computer realize the data display device and the data display method are stored in the portable medium, fixed medium or communication medium described above in a readable manner, and the computer system 100 executes these programs by reading the programs stored in the recording medium. Apart from the computer system 100, the programs for data display can also be executed by another computer system 111 or the server 112 or jointly by another computer system 111 and the server 112.

[0037][0043] Although the invention has been described with respect to a specific embodiment, the appended claims are not to be thus limited but are to be construed as embodying all modifications and alternative constructions that may occur to one skilled in the art which fairly fall within the basic teaching herein set forth.

[0038][0044] In the present embodiment, ~~weighting of plural data objects presented by similar data display ways~~object sets represented in the same data representation type is performed based on the appearance ~~characteristic property of the data object set~~. However, the data object sets themselves may be applied with a weighted value values and the predetermined data object set which needs to be accentuated may be highlighted.

[0039][0045] Moreover, all the manual processes explained in the present embodiment can be entirely or in part carried out automatically. The sequence of processes, the sequence of controls, specific names, and data including various parameters (e.g. weighted value) can be altered as required unless otherwise specified.

[0040][0046] The constituent elements of the device illustrated are merely conceptual and may not necessarily physically resemble the structures shown in the drawings. For instance, the data display device need not necessarily have the structure that is illustrated. The device as a whole or in part can be broken down or integrated either functionally or physically in accordance with the load or how the device is to be used.

[0041][0047] The process functions executed by each device may be realized, entirely or in part, by the central processing unit and the programs executed by the CPU, or by hardware through wired logic.

[0042][0048] According to the present invention, the appearance characteristic of each of the ~~plural data objects presented by similar data display ways~~property of each object set represented in the same data representation type is obtained, and each ~~data-object set~~ is displayed in a distinct appearance based on its appearance ~~characteristic~~ property. Consequently, a data display device is obtained in which plural ~~data-objects~~object sets can be distinctly visualized even if they are ~~presented by similar data display ways~~represented in the same representation type.

[0043][0049] According to the present invention, the appearance characteristic of each of the ~~plural data object presented by a fill data display way~~ property of each object represented in a fill data representation type is obtained, and each ~~data-object set~~ is displayed in a distinct appearance based on its appearance ~~characteristic~~ property. Consequently, a data display device allows the ~~information-data~~ to be distinctly visualized even if ~~individual pieces of the information are presented on a screen by the fill data display way~~ different types of data are represented in the fill data representation type on a screen.

[0044][0050] According to the present invention, the appearance characteristic of each of the ~~plural data objects presented by a vector data display way~~ property of each object set represented in a vector data representation type is obtained, and each ~~data-object~~ object set is displayed in a distinct appearance based on its appearance ~~characteristic~~ property. Consequently, a data display device allows the ~~information-data~~ to be distinctly visualized even if ~~individual pieces of the information are presented on a screen by the vector data display way~~ different types of data are represented in the vector data representation type on a screen.

[0045][0051] Although the invention has been described with respect to a specific embodiment for a complete and clear disclosure, the appended claims are not to be thus limited but are to be construed as embodying all modifications and alternative constructions that may occur to one skilled in the art which fairly fall within the basic teaching herein set forth.